

# Aesthetic Appreciation of Rock Paintings

Paper Submission: 15/10/2020, Date of Acceptance: 25/10/2020, Date of Publication: 26/10/2020

## Abstract

As human nature, we all tend to judge another's capabilities and intellectually inferior to us. This human tendency becomes more apt when it comes to judging the primitive arts around the world; however, we forget that those are the examples from which the modern artists have gotten the inspirations to create something beautiful and noteworthy. We, as a part of the human evolution, must understand that the primitive societies did not paint to impress others. Their art expressions were not meant to be analyzed and scrutinized by the modern men, as they were expressed to depict what is there around their living environment. According to Alexander Goldenweiser, the notable anthropologist "people in general, and primitive in particular, do not think or analyze their culture- they live it. It never occurs to them to synthesize what they live or reduces it to a common denominator, as it were". In this article, I will try to reiterate the fact that primitive art was nowhere inferior to that of modern art.

**Keywords:** Bhimabetaka, Isolated Paintings, Group Paintings, Decorative Drawings, Outline Drawings.



**Shalini Bharti**

Associate Professor,  
Dept. of Drawing and Painting  
Govt.Arts College  
Kota, Rajasthan, India

## Introduction

Many art scholars have doubted the artistic merits of primitive paintings. They said that primitive art differs from modern art by always being utilitarian. They also say that those paintings were not meant to be admired by men. They were meant to please the animal spirits. That is why pictures were often painted one over another. When the Indian paintings are observed from this viewpoint, it is found that the role of magical charm is much less here. The purpose of self-expression and decoration seems to be more generous in this case. There is a different reason for the superimposition available in the paintings. Then there is a tire gap between the two styles superimposed on one another. A large no of paintings suggests a lack of space on the canvas. Thirdly, the artist of the later period tried to show their skill by inviting comparison.

The activities of the primitive men were minimal, and in that more straightforward social structure of primitive tribes, the word utilitarian has an altogether different meaning. There is no clear contrast between art for art's sake and art in the service of practical purpose. The aesthetic function may be complementary to utilitarian. Herbert Read has pointed out this fact very well when he says."Art without function is always in danger of developing self-consciousness. Nevertheless, art begins where the function ends. Where functional forms are equal in operative efficiency, there is still a space for the aesthetic sensibility to make a choice."

Modern people are intellectually more developed than primitive people, but intellectual development is in no way essential for aesthetic sensibility. Reed is justified when he says "The aesthetic sense is inherent in most people irrespective of their intellectual starting" and this is clearly shown by a consideration of the art of primitive people.

When the meaning of purpose is taken into consideration, it opens a wide field of speculation. In a sense, all the paintings can be called utilitarian. Various forms of primitive Art have, of course, a practical purpose. The desire to convey information led to pictographic art and the urge to record important event developed into what may be called historical art. The pictographic art led to the invention of alphabetic signs or letters. The primitive artist laid the foundation of modern civilization in the past. It will not be justified to call the rock paintings only primitive art and that they had no aesthetic sensibility in them. They are the accurate representation of the aesthetic sensibility of their time.

The techniques employed in the paintings are discussed here briefly. Inadequate technical means are not necessarily characteristic of primitive art. On the contrary, the materials in which the primitive artists worked, such as stone, ivory, bone, wood, clay and metal are everywhere the same. Even the paintings, the mineral colours and vegetable colours are in many cases similar. The means at the disposal of the artist belonged to his cultural level and his surroundings. The aim of the primitive artist was good art. Before he could begin an artistic work, and then prepare his tools and material. The pigment used for colours is generally the same everywhere. Mostly, the colour is ochre and red, but other colours like white yellow, pink, black and green have also been found. The earliest paintings are generally in burnt red colour. The artist gradually developed a fancy towards colour and attempted bichrome and polychrome paintings. The bichrome paintings can be seen at Pachmarhi, Bhimabetaka, Bhopal, Kharwai, Raisen, Pulalikarar and Sagar areas.

One of the best examples of bichrome painting is bison figure at Abchand. In this figure, the entire body of the animal is filled with red colour, leaving the belly part blank, so that the colour of the rock gets prominence and give a bichrome effect.

The contribution of the artist towards the polychrome painting is minimal. So far, only two drawings representing a Mangalghat and a human figure have been located in Bhimabetaka area. These paintings have a beautiful colour combination, and they seem to have joined their traditions with Ajanta and Bagh paintings. The thickness of the colour is quite noticeable, and sometimes strokes are visible to the naked eye, shows the direction in which the artist has applied the paste. As soon as he applied the colour to the wall, the sandstone soaked the colour, making it difficult to erase.

The area survey shows that the artist has drawn the paintings mainly in profile, but there are some individual paintings which have a front view. Indeed, the primitive artists generally used only one angle in their drawings, but there are certain groups where the artists have tried to give a perspective effect to their paintings. Dhabuaghat, Abchand and Monteroza is an excellent example of this type of paintings. In the group of Shyamala hills rock-shelters where two make figures are shown with their cattles. The first male figure is comparatively more prominent than the second one.

Similarly, the animal figures drawn in the paintings also give the impression of distance. In some paintings, it can be seen whether the artist was right-handed or left-handed. If an artist was a right-handed man, he drew the figures facing towards his left, and if he was left-handed, he reversed it. In these paintings, both types of figures are evident when it comes to their styles and techniques. Mr. Jagdish Gupta has divided these paintings into five categories: Silhouette style or flat, filled with drawings.

1. Half-filled drawings
2. Outline drawings
3. Decorative drawings

#### 4. Spray paintings

According to him, the inter-mixture of these styles produces five more styles which are particularly noticeable in the group paintings than in isolated paintings. Artists adopted many techniques in due course of time. He has divided the techniques into eight forms:

1. Isolated paintings
2. Group paintings
3. Framed paintings
4. Synthetic paintings
5. Analytical painting
6. Naturalistic (Naturalistic)
  - (a) realistic (b) imaginary (c) x-ray
7. Abstract paintings
8. Dynamic paintings

Here we will discuss the styles in brief.

#### **Silhouette Drawings**

This is a full-wash style. In this style, the artist had concentrated his attention on giving shadow outlines of the figure or profile, filled with colour. Internal parts of the body had no importance to him. These paintings are mainly in dark red or ochre colour, but yellow, white, purple and black colours have also been found in different areas.

#### **Half-filled Drawings**

In these paintings, the artist has left out the internal part of the figures without any colour. The colourless part increases the decoration of the figure and produce some artistic effect.

#### **Outline Drawings**

These paintings represent a higher level of art. In these types of paintings, the artist had to present the subject matter through the media of outlines. Generally, we find the figures in a single outline. In some cases, the thickest outline is present in double lines which a single line.

#### **Decorative Drawings**

These paintings suggest that the primitive artist had quite a developed aesthetic sense. From the very beginning, the artists had a liking for decoration. Square-shaped human figures at Pachmarhi or other places have linear decoration, where wavy lines have filled the body. Under the 'stick shape' style, the artist has decorated the animal figures with geometric designs. In these figures, the artist has drawn squares, triangle, circles, different loops and sigma. Most commonly used design is cross-hatching with the help of several lines, a net design is formed. This design is also found in the pottery drawings of Indus Valley and other chalcolithic cultures.

#### **Spray Paintings**

The artist has also used the spray paintings style which is limited only to Indian rock-paintings. This type of painting has been found from Kakarapahad, where the colourless spots creates a net-design. In this painting, the artist used the net as a stencil and used net design to paint on the rock wall. In this type of paintings, the technique was unique. Artist kept stencil on the canvas, and then the liquid colour was poured into the mouth or in some hollow object like a bamboo or buffalo horn, and then the air

## Anthology : The Research

was blow through the mouth via that hollow object. With this technique, the artist sprinkled the colour over that stencil and then removed the stencil.

The artist drew a painting of all sizes. There are several paintings which represent the full size of the animal and human figures. The best example of these type of animals was bison and an elephant figure of Adamgarh, the decorated bull figure at Abchand, decorated tiger and the significant bull figure in white colour at Barkheda. However, the artist drew most of the paintings in miniature. Generally, the figures range in from six inches to one foot.

Shockingly, inanimate nature did not attract this artist. Artist tried to represent human figures, birds and beads, but mountains, rivers, lake and trees. The primitive artist was not only able to present action and situation but was able to express appropriate emotions. The feelings which the artist has depicted in the paintings are affection, fear, anger, worry, joy and curiosity. Bhimbetaka there is a painting in which a huge bull is charging a human figure angrily. The artist has very well depicted the bull's anger with the help of a few lines coming out of the nose of the animal. The dancing groups of rock paintings are the best representations of the emotion of joy. In a group scene in Maradeo Shelter, there are two hunters, and a female figure standing before a huge tiger standing before her. In her surprise, she has placed her hand on her mouth. Undoubtedly it suggests that the primitive artist were able to represent emotions.

The prehistoric graphic artist of India was a simple, straightforward and unsophisticated. It appears to us enormously, and we have no difficulty in understanding it. It is called primitive only in an appreciative sense. A new kind of vision is to be applied to understand it. Scholars perhaps may object that these artists have deviated from reality and that the paintings are not realistic.

Surprisingly, while portraying human figures, the artist has deviated from reality. We had squares to represent human beings, but animal figures drawn are quite realistic. It seems that in the very beginning the artist had not developed the ability to portray the human figures, but it occurred to him later and he went a step further to show animal exaggeration (Classification of the painting based on style.)

The stylistic classification of paintings are as follows. Naturalistic art in India had an abrupt beginning. No background of it is traceable here. It seems almost that the naturalistic art appeared at a single stroke.

Stylized paintings are from the second series. Both human, and animal figures are depicted in this series. The human figure is drawn is stick shaped and 'S' twist style while the female is drawn in

square shape. Triangular head is placed over the body which has long and wavy hair internal part of the body are decorated with linear diagrams.

Schematic - The term 'schematic' refers to small simplified, almost geometric representation. The animal figures representing these series have articulation in the body. The internal part of the body is decorated with linear diagrams and dominated by intricate patterns.

Conventionalized- It represents those painting which indicates the stage from which real concept of human as well as animal forms was established, and the end of the painting tradition was followed.

Eclectic- In this series, the painters chose any of the styles mentioned above. That is why almost all the type of paintings found in this series. The highest development of the artistic ability is reached in these paintings which have been classified under x-ray drawings. Here the artist has tried to show the internal part of the body.

To sum-up, we can say that a man in his earliest and uncultured state might have been attracted and impressed by the beauty around him. This might have happened long before he himself started producing art forms. He initiated lines and figures as they were occurring in his natural environment to appreciate them fully.

### References

1. Bedekar, *Indian Rock-shelter Paintings: Their Significance, Rock Art in India, 1984.*
2. Brown P, *Notes on the Prehistoric Cave Paintings at Raigarh, Calcutta, 1923.*
3. Chakravarty, K.K.: *Rock-Art of India: ed. by K.K. Chakravarty, New Delhi. Arnold Heinemann Pub. 1984.*
4. Ghosh A.K., "Significance of Rock Art in the light of Ethnographic Parallels", *Rock Art in India 1984.*
5. Gupta, Jagdish, *PragailhasikBharatiyaChitrakala, Delhi, National Pub. House, 1987.*
6. Gupta J.P., *Bharatiya Kala Ke Pad-Chinha 1960.*
7. Joshi, M.P. Agrawal, "Rock Paintings in Kumaon", *Man and Environment V.II, 1978.*
8. Khatri, A.P. *Rock paintings of Adamgarh (Central India) and their ages, 1964.*
9. Pandey, S.K. *Indian Rock Art, Aryan Book International, New Delhi - 1993.*
10. Mathpal, Y.N. *Rock paintings of India An Ornithoiraphical Bulletin of Deccan College Research Institute Pune V. 35-1976.*
11. Mishra, V.N. *Prehistoric culture sequence of Bhimbetaka. A prehistoric man and his Art in central India, Pune 1970.*
12. Pandey, S.K. *NaryavalliKeGauchar Chitra Madhya Pradesh Sandesh - 1962 Gwalior.*